

# P I K E S

RECOMMENDED BY

GENERAL HALE,

IN A

“LETTER TO THE PEOPLE OF ENGLAND,

“*Recommending a simple, cheap, and effectual Method of defending  
“ themselves and their Country at this alarming Juncture.”*

(A French invasion being much talked of about that time.)

---

[*Extracted from Politics for the People, Vol. II. page 325.*]

---

LONDON:

Sold by D. I. EATON, Cock and Swine, Newgate-Street; and  
J. SMITH, POP-GUN, Portsmouth-Street, Lincoln's-Inn-Fields.

[*Price* ONE HALFPENNY.]

---

“I SHALL confine myself to a few extracts, the whole treatise being too long to insert entire in your “Politics,” though it might be very proper, perhaps, to republish it separately, at a small price, since the right of having and using arms for self-defence is likely, in consequence of recent events, to be much discussed by those whom it most concerns.

“In the first place,” says the General, “I lay it down as a fundamental position in a free country, the *sine qua non*, that the people should be armed: without this precaution all the laws that ever were written are of no consequence; Locke and Milton have wrote, and Sydney and Hampden have bled, in vain; the Bill of Rights and Magna Charta are mere waste paper, empty claims, to be trampled upon or thrown into the fire by the first invader or tyrant who is strong enough to make his will the law.

“To prove the necessity and expediency of arming the people, it will not be amiss to cast an eye upon the other powers of Europe.

We

We shall see France [it was then a *monarchy*] and Spain, Germany and Russia, Denmark and Sweden, groaning under the yoke of a military government. Why? Because the people are unarmed, and there is no proper counterpoise to the enormous power of their standing armies. Why are the Americans, why are the Irish, why are the Swiss, why are the Dutch, a free people? Let history and your own experience tell you—Because they were armed. The people of this country, in former days, were all armed. In Queen Elizabeth's time twelve thousand men marched out of the town and parish of Halifax, to assist the Crown against the Earl of Westmoreland. I need not recite the perils to which this country has been since exposed, by a disuse of this salutary right.—Before I proceed any farther, I think it proper to say that I am authorised by the law of nature and by the law of the land in all I assert touching the right of the people to carry arms; and my assertion may suffice till some lawyer shall take upon him to refute me, which I defy all Westminster-hall to do.

“ In short, what I propose is a lasting barrier against foreign force and *internal oppression*; for, as an able writer has lately observed, the security, and consequently the happiness of a free people, does not consist in their belief, however firm, that the executive power will not attempt to invade their just rights, but in their consciousness that any such attempt would be wholly ineffectual.

“ It may be asked, whether the chief part of my plan is not intended to resist, or at least to awe the government. I cannot answer this question better than by asking another—Does government mean to oppress the people? If it does not, it has nothing to fear; if it does, it may and ought to be resisted. There may arise cases in which resistance is not rebellion, but a just, virtuous, and honorable self-defence; and though we had nothing to fear at present, no one knows what we may have in future: we have heard of loans, benevolences, and ship-money, in former reigns; and perhaps in some future one some less barefaced, more plausible, but quite as effectual a mode may be struck out, of taking the people's money out of their pockets without their consent; and whenever that time arrives, and those who are bound in duty to protect shall attempt to enslave the people, all allegiance will cease, and we shall have no other party to take, but to clap one hand upon our pockets and the other upon our swords. A short fable will illustrate my meaning.—‘ A boar was whetting his tusks against a tree: What are you at, says the fox; preparing your arms when there is no enemy near? When the enemy is at hand, says the boar, I shall have something else to do.’

“ But I hasten to the mode of arming the people, because I think the measure itself becomes every moment more necessary, whilst  
the

the winter gives us time to breathe, confines the enemy to their posts, and delays that retaliation which we may reasonably expect from their united efforts. Driven thus to the wall, we *must* defend ourselves against those whom our ministers have brought upon us ; we must be upon the defensive, (though we have enemies whom we might perhaps with justice attack) but whether we attack or defend we *must be armed*: the question is, how ? I answer, with a *knife*, as you are armed already ; no alteration is requisite but in the handle : a common *carving knife*, with a *bayonet handle* is all that I esteem requisite in the hands of an Englishman, to defend his life, his liberty, and his property, provided that he can find a broomstick, or any stick at all of a proper length, to fix it upon. This little weapon is not only as good as the bayonet, it is as much *better* as the pole upon which you fix it is longer than the musket upon which the soldiers fix their bayonets ; for it must be understood that the musket, as a fire-arm, is better not used at all by those who have the courage to use the bayonet : and upon this subject I must beg my countrymen to give me a little credit ; they credit the priest, the physician, and the lawyer, in many things of which, for want of reading and experience, they have not very clear ideas ; let me hope, then, that in one instance at least they will trust a soldier, and not suppose, because we swear a little now and then, that we will not scruple to lye : I advance it, then, as a truth, of which I am thoroughly persuaded myself, that suppose two armies drawn up opposite each other, equal in number, courage, and discipline, each armed with muskets and bayonets, whereof the muskets on one side should be loaded with powder and ball, and those on the other not loaded at all, I say I have not the least doubt but that the army, making use of their bayonets only would prove victorious. This opinion of mine is founded upon that of the greatest Generals who have lived since fire-arms were invented, particularly the Prince of Condé, Charles the Twelfth, and Marshal Saxe ; and I dare say it will be supported by the Generals of our own time who have had any experience in war, or possess the knowledge of the human heart. If this position is granted me, it follows, that the musket may be dispensed with ; that we may throw away a load of useless wood and iron, and a magazine of powder and ball ; and of course advance (I wont say retreat, because that must not be thought of) much faster than an enemy can retire before us, encumbered as they will be with their arms and ammunition. We may as well have done with our cannon too, when we are about it ; they are like the trunk-maker, more noise than work, and an army without them would walk round an army who had them to drag. But no more of this at present ; I proceed to my plan, and propose that every man, from the peer to the peasant, should be provided with this  
*knife*



*knife* and the *pole* to fix it upon. I propose then a general and armed association, for the purpose of repelling a foreign invader or resisting a *domestic tyrant*. Let the king himself, if he approves the plan, be the first to give it countenance; let him put arms into the hands of his subjects under this express stipulation, that they shall use them against himself, if he should ever dare to be oppressive or unjust. Next let the peerage sign, &c.

“After having put weapons into the hands of my countrymen, I shall be asked, how are they to make use of them? To this my answer shall be as plain as the weapon itself, *as plain as a pike-staff*. Suppose a mad dog were running open-mouthed towards a man armed with my weapon, need I say that he is to turn the point against the animal, and thrust it down his throat?—Every man, of whatever country he may be, who attempts to deprive another of his life, or rob him of his property, should be considered as a mad dog, and treated in the same manner. It would lead me into too wide a field to treat of the different methods of forming troops before they engage: I presume, whenever a people take up arms, they will choose men to conduct them who have some experience in the art of war, and whose courage and integrity may be depended upon: as to the rest, let them take care to go forth *armed with a good cause*, as well as a good weapon; and in support of such a cause, if they are resolved to fight, let them attack their enemies, and they will have already gained at least half the battle.”

‘By way of frontispiece, General Hale exhibits the figure of his proposed *knife*; from which it appears, that the *blade* was to be eleven inches and three quarters in length, and one inch and a quarter broad at the bottom; that the *handle* was to be four inches and a half in length, and one inch in diameter; and that the *haft* was to be eight feet. He produced some of the instruments at a general county meeting at York; but, the fear of an invasion blowing over, and the peasantry being more inclined to handle the plough or spade than to look at a warlike implement, the scheme took no effect. How far it may deserve to be recommended at present, when the bare imagination of such an instrument, for the defence of a man’s person or property, is deemed an overt act of high treason, I shall not pretend to determine.

‘To this I have only to add, that the General is still living, though it is highly probable that, like other great men, his political opinions may not, in 1794, be precisely the same they were in 1781.’



